



September 8, 2006

<i>NOAA Gulf of Mexico News</i>	3
NOAA Gulf of Mexico Marine Debris Project Establishes Office in New Orleans, LA	3
Texas Habitat Protection Advisory Panel to Discuss Fishery Habitat Issues	3
Mississippi/Louisiana Habitat Protection Advisory Panel to Meet	4
Hypoxia Science Advisory Board Formed	4
Hot Off the Press: HURREVAC Quick Reference Guide	5
NOAA Leads Major Air Quality Research Effort in East Texas and Gulf of Mexico	5
NOAA Unveils Hurricane Katrina Web Site Capturing the Storm's Power and Aftermath	6
Commerce Secretary Announces Gulf Seafood Safe to Eat as One-Year Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina Approaches	6
Commerce Secretary Announces \$128 Million Cooperative Agreement to Assist Gulf States Recover and Monitor Fisheries	7
Office of Coast Survey Publishes New Chart 11339	8
Community Based Restoration Program 10-Year Celebration	8
<i>In the Gulf States</i>	9
Stream Restoration Workshop Enhances Watershed Management	9
ADEM Identifies Outstanding Alabama Waters	9
The Florida Building Commission Met to Determine New Wind-Borne Debris Requirements ...	10
Decline in Apalachicola River Levels Greater than Previously Thought	11
MS DMR to Hold Meeting With Oyster Harvesters Sept. 12	12
Paddlers Wanted at Grand Bay Reserve for Coastal Cleanup	13
LRA Long Term Planning Task Force Receives Updates and Final Reports from Duany Neighborhood Design Charrettes	14
20th Texas General Land Office Adopt-A-Beach Fall Cleanup Set for September 23	15
Patterson Aims to Save Family Farms and Ranches	16

<i>Other News</i>	17
Gulf of Mexico Alliance Community Workshop Report Now Available	17
Interagency Seamless Network Summit	17
Gulf Guardian Awards Application Deadline Extended to Sept 15, 2006	18
Charting the Course for Ocean Science in the United States: Research Priorities for the Next Decade	18
<i>Energy</i>	19
Government Proposes Beginning Oil and Gas Lease Sales in Central Gulf of Mexico	19
Florida Awards First Solar Energy Rebates	20
Patterson Stakes Claim for Texas Wind Power with Research Bid	20
Public Hearing on Proposed Construction and Operation of Onshore LNG Import Terminal ...	22
<i>Grant Opportunities</i>	23
Marine Debris Project Funding Opportunity	23
<i>Training and Conferences</i>	23
Training Workshops Scheduled for Red Snapper IFQ System	23
Register Online for Restore America’s Estuaries 3rd National Conference	24

NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

NOAA Gulf of Mexico Marine Debris Project Establishes Office in New Orleans, LA

On Monday, September 11, 2006, the NOAA Gulf of Mexico Marine Debris Project (GOMMDP) team will open a field coordination office in New Orleans, LA. In response to the threat of submerged marine debris in the LA, MS, and AL coastal zones, The Office of Response and Restoration (OR&R) and Office of Coast Survey have established the GOMMDP to execute the recently passed \$20M emergency supplemental appropriation in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. The purpose of the survey work is to promote the removal of debris, to restore safe navigation, and reestablish commercial fishing in the coastal regions of LA, MS, and AL. OR&R personnel will facilitate the coordination of a debris risk assessment criteria along with a public information program to ensure federal and state agencies, fishing communities, and general public are aware of survey planning, progress, and findings. For more information, contact [Brendan Bray](#).

Texas Habitat Protection Advisory Panel to Discuss Fishery Habitat Issues

Tampa, Florida – August 31, 2006 - A panel of concerned representatives of Texas recreational and commercial fishing groups, conservation organizations, academia, and state and federal resource agencies will gather at the Hobby Airport Hilton, 8181 Airport Boulevard, Houston, Texas to review and discuss fishery habitat issues. The meeting will convene at 9:00 a.m., Tuesday, September 26, 2006 and is expected to adjourn by 4:00 p.m. that same day.

The advisory panel (AP) is scheduled to discuss the deepening of the Matagorda Ship Channel, the Bahia Grande restoration project, the Texas Artificial Reef Program, the Beacon Port LNG project, dredging associated with the Calhoun LNG facility in Lavaca Bay, as well as review the Gulf Council's Ecosystem Management Plan. An update on the Sabine-Neches waterway deepening project will also be presented. For a copy of the agenda, please call 813-348-1630.

The group is part of a three unit Habitat Protection AP of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. The principal role of the AP is to assist the Council in its attempt to maintain optimum conditions within the habitat and ecosystems supporting the marine resources of the Gulf of Mexico. Advisory panels serve as a first alert system and calls to the Council's attention proposed projects being developed, as well as other activities that may adversely impact the Gulf marine fisheries and supporting ecosystems. The panels may also provide advice to the Council on its policies and procedures for addressing environmental affairs.

Although other issues not on the agenda may come before the panel for discussion, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, those issues may not be the subject of formal panel action during this meeting. Panel action will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in the agenda listed as available by this notice.

The meeting is open to the public and is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to the Council five working days prior to the meeting.

Mississippi/Louisiana Habitat Protection Advisory Panel to Meet

Tampa, Florida – September 8, 2006 - A panel of concerned representatives of Louisiana and Mississippi recreational and commercial fishing groups, conservation organizations, academia, and state and federal resource agencies will gather at the New Orleans Airport Hilton, 901 Airline Highway, New Orleans, Louisiana to review and discuss fishery habitat issues. The meeting will convene at 8:30 a.m., Tuesday, October 3, 2006 and is expected to adjourn by 5:00 p.m. that same day. The advisory panel (AP) is scheduled to discuss the following issues:

- Port of Iberia channel deepening project
- Morganza to the Gulf of Mexico hurricane protection project
- Donaldsonville to the Gulf of Mexico hurricane protection project
- Proposed Atchafalaya River Ship Channel deepening
- Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Plan
- Mississippi River Gulf Outlet deauthorization
- Coastal Impact Assessment Program
- Port of Pascagoula Dredged Material Management Plan status
- Mississippi Coastal Improvements Plan
- Council Ecosystem Management Plan

For a copy of the agenda, please call 813-348-1630. The group is part of a three unit Habitat Protection AP of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. The principal role of the AP is to assist the Council in its attempt to maintain optimum conditions within the habitat and ecosystems supporting the marine resources of the Gulf of Mexico. Advisory panels serve as a first alert system and calls to the Council's attention proposed projects being developed, as well as other activities that may adversely impact the Gulf marine fisheries and supporting ecosystems. The panels may also provide advice to the Council on its policies and procedures for addressing environmental affairs.

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Hypoxia Science Advisory Board Formed

The EPA Hypoxia Science Advisory Board was recently formed to conduct an evaluation of the complex scientific and technical issues that affect the causes, location, magnitude and duration of the hypoxic zone in the Northern Gulf of Mexico, as well as the priority and feasibility of management and control options in the Mississippi River Basin and Gulf to reduce it. NOAA

participates on the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force and related activities such as the Science Advisory Board and scientific reassessment. For more information contact [Rob Magnien](#) or [Alan Lewitus](#).

Websites for more information:

Hypoxia SAB: http://www.epa.gov/sab/panels/hypoxia_adv_panel.htm

SAB Panel listing: http://www.epa.gov/sab/pdf/hypoxia_determination_memo_8-4-06.pdf

Hot Off the Press: HURREVAC Quick Reference Guide

The NOAA Coastal Services Center, in coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, has just published HURREVAC: A Quick Reference Guide. This guide is a companion publication to the HURREVAC software used by emergency managers for hurricane evacuation planning. With HURREVAC, emergency officials can access NOAA forecast data efficiently from their desktop computers, including historical and current hurricane tracks, cones of uncertainty, and inland flood and tidal forecasts. This guide will help new emergency officials navigate the software more easily and inform seasoned users about recent updates. To download the reference guide visit: <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/HAW2/english/downloads.shtml>. For more information, contact [Jodie Towers](#).

NOAA Leads Major Air Quality Research Effort in East Texas and Gulf of Mexico

More than 200 scientists, five aircraft, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's premier research ship, and an array of land and sea-based sensors are converging in east Texas and the northwestern Gulf of Mexico this summer to observe the area's pollution levels and assess the impact on air quality and regional and global climate. NOAA's Earth System Research Laboratory in Boulder is leading the joint study, along with 60 federal, state, university, and private-sector partners Aug. 21 through Sept. 30.

"The air quality aspect of the study is an example of how NOAA's applied and operational science mission saves lives and protects human health. It also will provide information needed to devise practical environmental action, saving money for taxpayers and industry," said retired Navy Vice Adm. [Conrad Lautenbacher](#), Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "The study will seek to solve some of the most complex questions about atmospheric exchange of heat, so that we can understand the overall global climate system."

The Texas Air Quality Study is one of the nation's largest air quality field campaigns to date. Researchers are taking detailed measurements of air chemistry and summer weather to help the state's decision-makers develop cost-effective strategies for managing ozone pollution. The new information also will shed light on complex air quality problems elsewhere in the nation and assist efforts to meet Environmental Protection Agency standards for ozone, airborne particles or aerosols, and regional haze. NOAA's primary planning and funding partners in TexAQS 2006 are the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the Texas Environmental Research Consortium.

In a companion study, researchers at the Gulf of Mexico Atmospheric Composition and Climate Study, are trying to determine how the same local and distant pollution sources that affect air quality in Texas may also influence regional and global climate. The primary focus is how aerosols affect heating and cooling in the climate system, either directly by absorbing or scattering radiation, or indirectly by increasing the number of small droplets in clouds. In computer models of future climate change, the impact of aerosol and clouds on climate is the most uncertain. Aerosols also can alter rainfall, convection and the lifetime of clouds.

“This experiment is a key part of NOAA’s climate program to address the direct and indirect effects of aerosols on the exchange of solar radiation between the surface of the Earth and space,” says NOAA’s A.R. Ravishankara, director of ESRL’s Chemical Sciences Division. “The results of these experiments will have important implications for other regions and for global climate.”

On the Web:

TexAQS/GoMACCS: <http://esrl.noaa.gov/csd/2006>

NOAA Unveils Hurricane Katrina Web Site Capturing the Storm’s Power and Aftermath

Web Site Offers Comprehensive Look at the Historic Storm and NOAA’s Response

August 29, 2006 — A year to the day after Hurricane Katrina became the most destructive hurricane ever to strike the United States, NOAA launched a new Web site detailing the development of the storm, its power and destruction. The site also highlights NOAA’s multi-faceted response to the storm’s aftermath, including floods, testing fisheries, clearing waterways, identifying and cleaning up oil spills. In addition, there are dozens of photos and satellite images that capture Hurricane Katrina’s march into the Gulf of Mexico and its subsequent landfall on the U.S. Gulf Coast.

Relevant Web Sites

[NOAA Katrina Portal](#)

[NOAA Hurricanes Page](#)

Commerce Secretary Announces Gulf Seafood Safe to Eat as One-Year Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina Approaches

U.S. Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez declared today that gulf seafood continues to show no signs of elevated contaminants as the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina approaches. Secretary Gutierrez made the announcement at Galatoire’s Restaurant in the French Quarter of New Orleans as he challenged investors from all over the country and the world to come and invest in the region, stressing that New Orleans and the Gulf Coast are open for business.

The Department of Commerce’s National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has concluded its series of post-Katrina testing of Gulf seafood, water and sediment. The fourth and final monitoring report, issued this week, shows that samples of white shrimp collected between September 2005 and April 2006 contain no elevated levels of chemical contaminants. Shrimp samples collected in late fall showed a slight spike in hydrocarbons due to exposure to oil in the water, but that spike was well below FDA’s concern level for human consumption and has since subsided.

“NOAA’s latest survey of possible seafood contamination in the Gulf of Mexico once again shows that Gulf seafood is safe to eat,” said Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez. “That’s great news for the Gulf Coast fishing industry, which represents one-fifth of our nation’s commercial fishery production, and for all of us who enjoy seafood.”

Since two weeks after Katrina made landfall, NOAA has been collecting and analyzing Gulf seafood, water and sediment for signs of bacteria and contaminants. The samples have consistently found no threat to human health. In December 2005, the U.S. government issued a multi-agency announcement declaring Gulf seafood safe to eat after extensive sampling and testing by the EPA, FDA, NOAA and the states found no cause for concern. NOAA has continued to monitor Gulf seafood for potential bio-accumulation of chemicals that were introduced into the Gulf of Mexico when floodwaters were pumped from the streets of New Orleans.

NOAA has received supplemental funding to continue monitoring post-hurricane environmental conditions in the Gulf of Mexico, and will report additional findings as warranted.

Commerce Secretary Announces \$128 Million Cooperative Agreement to Assist Gulf States Recover and Monitor Fisheries

(August 25, 2006) During a visit to New Orleans today, U.S. Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez announced the award of \$128 million for the five Gulf Coast States to respond to the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Specifically, these funds will be used by the states to assist in the restoration of oyster beds and shrimp grounds rehabilitation as well as monitoring the recovery of the Gulf fisheries.

These funds are part of a cooperative agreement awarded by the Department of Commerce’s National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration through the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission. “I want to thank Senators Thad Cochran and Richard Shelby for their leadership to secure these funds to help in the recovery of Gulf fisheries,” said Gutierrez. “Commercial oyster and shrimp operations in the Gulf of Mexico are vital economic components in the region and I am pleased NOAA is able to play a significant role in their recovery.”

Secretary Gutierrez made the announcement at Galatoire’s Restaurant in the French Quarter of New Orleans as he challenged investors from all over the country and world to come and invest in the region stressing that New Orleans and the Gulf Coast are open for business.”

Since the devastating impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, NOAA Fisheries Service has worked closely with its Gulf coast partners to help ensure the recovery and restoration of affected fisheries. Through this award, NOAA and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission will coordinate activities with the states of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida.

These states have committed to plans to restore oyster beds and shrimp grounds, and monitor the recovery of Gulf fisheries. The \$128 million will be utilized as follows: \$51 million will be allocated for oyster restoration, \$38 million on oyster bed and shrimp ground rehabilitation, and \$38 million directed toward cooperative research and monitoring activities. A partial list of projects by state include:

- **Mississippi** - Oyster reef restoration, enhancement and monitoring; shrimp and blue crab habitat restoration, enhancement and monitoring; and artificial reef restoration (\$38 million)
- **Alabama** - habitat mapping, oyster grounds restoration, oyster, shrimp and fish nursery restoration, and cooperative research (\$30 million)
- **Louisiana** - reseeding and restoration of oyster grounds, rehabilitating oyster bed and shrimp grounds, debris removal, cooperative research to monitor recovery (\$53 million)
- **Texas** - habitat mapping, restoration and debris removal (\$3 million)
- **Florida** - oyster reef habitat restoration; develop scientific protocol for assessing resource damage and recovery (\$4 million)

Office of Coast Survey Publishes New Chart 11339

The Office of Coast Survey is publishing a new chart for the Calcasieu Ship Channel and Port of Lake Charles, LA, this week to support maritime commerce and the growing liquid natural gas industry. The new chart was created with the assistance of the Port of Lake Charles, Lake Charles Pilots, and the U.S. Coast Guard. The Port of Lake Charles is the 12th largest port in the nation, and the new NOAA chart will be valuable for the growth of the Port and increased safety in the Calcasieu Ship Channel. For more information, contact [Tim Osborn](#).

Community Based Restoration Program 10-Year Celebration

Sept 18, 2006 - Robinson Island, AL

The Gulf of Mexico Foundation is coordinating a celebratory event to highlight the accomplishments of NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program (CRP). This year marks the 10th year of the program which has funded more than 1,000 on-the-ground marine habitat restoration projects in 27 states, Canada, and the Caribbean. A model program for community collaboration, partnership building, and interagency cooperation, the CRP partners with grassroots organizations to encourage hands-on citizen participation in restoration projects.

Organizers have chosen Robinson Island, AL site of the GMF's Robinson Island Restoration and Protection Project as the focus of the celebration. With financial assistance from NOAA, Robinson Island was recently purchased by the City of Orange Beach after a developer planned to build homes on the uninhabited island which lies only 200 yards off shore in Perdido Bay. The island is a favorite recreation site and the possibility of development so upset the residents that public support led to the \$4.25 million purchase by the city and subsequent protection and restoration of some of the habitat on and around the 13-acre island.

Currently the Gulf of Mexico Foundation, NOAA, and the Gulf of Mexico Program have granted funds to Dauphin Island Sea Lab to help restore and protect 35 acres of seagrass around the island, some of which has been damaged by prop scarring, and to restore 1.6 acres of storm-damaged dune habitat through native planting. The project also includes signage at local boat launches and marinas explaining the importance of sensitive marine habitats. The celebration, which is open to the public, will be held at nearby Boggy Point Public Boat Ramp on Sept 18, 2006.

In the Gulf States

Stream Restoration Workshop Enhances Watershed Management

Water resource professionals from five states recently attended a stream restoration workshop in Gadsden, sponsored by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, to learn innovative, economical designs to restore streams to more natural conditions.

“Stream Restoration Using Natural Channel Design” promoted advanced watershed management techniques required to achieve effective conservation of inland and coastal stream segments, and for mitigating the effects of non-point source pollution caused by construction runoff, agricultural operations and erosion. “Gaining a better understanding of managing our watersheds is vital to ensure the long-term quality of Alabama’s water,” said ADEM Director Trey Glenn. “These educational and outreach opportunities give us a chance to teach better ways to manage the environment and safeguard our watersheds.”

The stream restoration workshop offered participants technical information for securing demonstration projects in targeted areas, including review of natural channel design principles, restoration case studies and the practical application of accepted restoration methods.

Local, state and federal agency representatives, watershed groups, private industry, consultants and interested landowners used classroom and field work to learn efficient means of restoring streams, making surrounding areas more environmentally friendly and improving water quality. Since 2002, more than 450 natural resource professionals from 14 states have been trained in stream restoration techniques through ADEM’s stream restoration program.

ADEM Identifies Outstanding Alabama Waters

MONTGOMERY – Alabama has long been known for its bountiful water resources. The state’s surface waters encompass more than 77,000 miles of rivers and streams, 481,000 acres of publicly-owned lakes and reservoirs, 610 square miles of estuaries and 50 miles of coastal shoreline.

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management is charged with characterizing and assessing the status of surface waters relative to their assigned designated uses. One special designation, “Outstanding Alabama Water” is consistent with the goals established by federal and state water regulations for high-quality waters protected from new or expanded point-source discharges. OAW resources include waters of state parks, wildlife refuges, and those of exceptional recreational or ecological significance.

Outstanding Alabama Waters include approximately 173 miles of river and stream segments in the Cahaba Basin, including sections of the Cahaba and Little Cahaba Rivers; 75 miles in the Coosa Basin, including portions of Lake Mitchell and Hatchet Creek; and 42 miles of river and stream segments in the Mobile Basin. “Safeguarding Alabama’s water quality is a driving force

for us,” said ADEM Director Trey Glenn. “We encourage everyone to use our state’s water resources wisely to help maintain them for future generations.”

The department is reviewing information for other water segments that may support the OAW use and will propose the changes where appropriate. Water quality parameters supporting the OAW classification are a significant benchmark for developing future monitoring activities, providing for the prevention, abatement and control of new or existing discharges and providing the basis for upgrading additional water bodies.

ADEM applies scientific criteria to measure the degree to which the quality of a water segment is consistent with its designated use. Data that may be considered when assessing state waters includes water chemistry information, land use or land cover data, dissolved oxygen level, habitat evaluations, fish community assessments and bacteriological data.

The Florida Building Commission Met to Determine New Wind-Borne Debris Requirements

~Wind-Borne Debris requirements and 2006 Glitch Amendments create advancements to standards of Florida Building Code ~

MIAMI -- The Florida Building Commission today completed their monthly Commission meeting in Miami Lakes, Florida. The Commission met to discuss and implement changes to the products and standards element in the Florida Building Code.

A final decision was made today on the Wind-Borne Debris Region requirements for the Florida Panhandle. The Commission voted 11-9 in favor of keeping with the decision made at the July 11, 2006 meeting in San Destin, Florida. The Florida Building Commission decided that the 130 mph criteria recommended by the University of Florida (UF) and Applied Research Associates (ARA) in a study were a reasonable and science based option for the Florida Panhandle.

“The decision made by the Commission today was the best one based on science and not politics,” said Florida Building Commission Chairman Raul L. Rodriguez. “The Commission weighed the options and decided on the best choice for the Florida Panhandle was to keep the line where the science from research had placed it.”

Along with the new Wind-Borne Debris Requirements, the Commission also discussed ways to apply the 2006 Glitch Amendments Process to the 2004 Florida Building Code, which is updated every three years. The Commission also confirmed that the 2006 Glitch Amendments will be available in October 2006 and will take effect in December. The Commission is currently examining long range planning for the 2007 edition.

“The continued improvement and updates by the Commission show their dedication to making a safer Florida Building Code,” said Florida Building Commission Executive Director Rick Dixon. “The impact of the 2006 Glitch Amendments release will further improve on the Code by making buildings and structures safer for all of Florida’s residents and businesses.”

Decline in Apalachicola River Levels Greater than Previously Thought

The report, "Water-Level Decline in the Apalachicola River, Florida, from 1954 to 2004, and Effects on Floodplain Habitats," is available at: <http://pubs.water.usgs.gov/sir2006-5173>

Declines in water levels in the Apalachicola River in Florida's panhandle occurred over the past 50 years as a result of erosion of the river channel and decreased spring and summer flow from upstream, according to a report released today by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). These declines are greater than previously thought and have caused drier conditions in wetland habitats in the adjacent river floodplain. Consequently, less water now moves into the hundreds of miles of floodplain streams, sloughs, and lakes that are essential to maintain healthy populations of fishes, mussels, and other aquatic life.

"Unfortunately, the largest drop in water levels has occurred during spring and summer, which is the most critical time of year for fish reproduction, wetland tree growth, and many other important biological processes," said USGS scientist Helen Light, the lead author of the report.

Erosion along the river bed and banks occurred first, and was apparently caused by construction of a dam at the Georgia-Florida border in 1954 and by extensive navigation improvements -- river straightening, dredging, and woody-debris removal -- during the next 2-3 decades. "Previous studies suggested that declines caused by channel widening and deepening were limited primarily to the upper 30 miles of the river," said Light, "but we now know that nearly the entire 86 miles of the non-tidal Apalachicola River and floodplain have been substantially altered by water-level declines caused by channel erosion."

Channel erosion stabilized after the late 1970s, but spring and summer water levels continued to decline in recent decades because of seasonal decreases in flow from the upstream watershed. Less flow during the spring and summer is likely caused by a combination of natural climatic changes and a variety of human activities in the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) River Basin, including agricultural irrigation, municipal water use, flow regulation, and reservoir evaporation.

The ACF River Basin, which covers one-quarter of the state of Georgia, extends from headwaters in northern Georgia through southwestern Georgia and eastern Alabama to the Florida panhandle, discharging into the Gulf of Mexico at the town of Apalachicola. The area for this study included the non-tidal portion of the Apalachicola River from the Georgia-Florida line downstream to the beginning of the tidal reach about 20 miles upstream from Apalachicola Bay. This report is the result of an interdisciplinary study by USGS integrating hydrology, geomorphology, and biology.

2005 Florida Guidebook to New Urbanism copies still available

The 2005 A Guidebook to New Urbanism in Florida commemorates and celebrates Florida's 120 plus New Urbanist developments and plans – over twice as many as the 2002 Guidebook that was developed by Center for Urban and Environmental Solutions.

The 2005 Guidebook features:

- Locations and essential facts about projects and plans
- Best practices from our state's successful historic urbanism

- Articles by leading practitioners and observers of the movement
- Florida New Urbanism resource list organized for easy reference

To order your guidebook today, go to:

http://www.cnuflorida.org/guidebook/documents/guidebook_ad.pdf or contact guidebook editor, Jean Scott, at 561-620-3815.

MS DMR to Hold Meeting With Oyster Harvesters Sept. 12

BILOXI, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) Shellfish Bureau will hold a meeting with oyster harvesters on Sept. 12 at 6:30 p.m. at the Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Extension Center, located at 1815 Popp's Ferry Road, Biloxi. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss oyster-related issues resulting from Hurricane Katrina, the status of recovery of our oyster reefs and the spring and fall cultch plants.

“As part of our continuing stewardship program this meeting will provide a great opportunity to get together with the oyster fishermen to plan how to best manage this resource and how to recover from the damages from Hurricane Katrina,” said Bradley Randall, DMR Shellfish Program Coordinator. For more Information, call Bradley Randall or Rita Duvernay at (228) 374-5000.

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is dedicated to enhancing, protecting and conserving marine interests of the State by managing all marine life, public trust wetlands, adjacent uplands and waterfront areas to provide for the optimal commercial, recreational, educational and economic uses of these resources consistent with environmental concerns and social changes. Visit the DMR online at www.dmr.state.ms.us.

Boaters Needed for Mississippi Coastal Cleanup

BILOXI, Miss.—Calling all boaters! The Mississippi Marine Debris Task Force is searching for volunteers with boats to aid in the island portion of the 18th Annual Mississippi Coastal Cleanup to be held from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. on Saturday, Sept. 16.

Private boaters are needed for cleanup of Petit Bois Island, Deer Island and the west end and southern tip of Cat Island. Boaters must sign up in advance to participate. To volunteer for Cat and Petit Bois islands call Terry Wildy at 875-9057, ext. 111 or Carol Loew at 875-9057, ext. 108. For Deer Island call Susan Perkins at 523-4051. Volunteers will be supplied with trash bags, data cards, pencils, latex gloves and a free drawstring backpack provided by Chevron Pascagoula Refinery. Volunteers under age 21 must have their parents sign a registration form, available online at the Mississippi Coastal Cleanup Web site, www.masgc.org/cleanup, and submit it prior to the cleanup. Children 12 and under are reminded that they must wear a life jacket if they are cleaning the island from a boat under 26 feet in length.

Following the cleanup, volunteers are invited for a free lunch of hamburgers, chicken sandwiches, potato chips and Coca-Cola products compliments of Outback Steakhouse, at its restaurant in D'Iberville, **between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. only** the day of the event. In Jackson County there will be a picnic for volunteers at The Shed Barbeque in Ocean Springs **between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. only** the day of the event. (Volunteers will need to show their lunch ticket to receive the free lunch at The Shed or Outback Steakhouse). In Hancock County, volunteers are invited for

hotdogs and drinks starting at 11 a.m. at the foot of Garfield Ladner Memorial Pier at Coleman Avenue in Waveland, courtesy of the Office of Congressman Gene Taylor and the Bay St. Louis Rotary Club.

Paddlers Wanted at Grand Bay Reserve for Coastal Cleanup

Bring your canoe or kayak and get ready to paddle for a cleaner Coast on Saturday, Sept. 16, 8 a.m. to 11 a.m., at the Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (GNDNERR), as part of the 18th annual Mississippi Coastal Cleanup. Participants who bring their own canoes and kayaks will be provided with the equipment needed to pick up trash along Bayou Heron. A limited number of canoes are available for volunteers (7 years of age and older) to use. Volunteers must call 475-7047 and sign up in advance to reserve a canoe. Cleanup participants who do not have access to a boat are also needed to clean up the area adjacent to the Bayou Heron Boat Launch.

People of all ages are invited to join the staff of the GNDNERR in the cleaning up of the reserve. Children 12 and under are reminded that they must wear a life jacket if they are cleaning the bayou from a boat. Please bring insect spray, sunscreen and a pair of work gloves, if possible. Wearing closed-toed shoes is also recommended.

Participants in the Grand Bay NERR cleanup should meet at the Grand Bay Reserve office, located at 6005 Bayou Heron Road in southeast Jackson County 7:30 a.m. to 8 a.m. on the day of the cleanup to sign in and receive their cleanup supplies. Participants are encouraged to call the GNDNERR office at (228) 475-7047 to pre-register and to receive additional details regarding the cleanup. A free drawstring backpack and “Stash Your Trash” awareness bracelet will be given to everyone who participates in the cleanup while supplies last. Children are welcome and encouraged to participate in the cleanup but must be accompanied by an adult.

After the cleanup, there will be a picnic for all Jackson County Coastal Cleanup participants at The Shed Barbeque in Ocean Springs from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., only on the day of the event. Cleanup participants will need to show their lunch ticket to receive a free lunch.

The GBNERR is located near the community of Pecan in southeast Jackson County and includes wild lands and waterways from Bangs Lake to the Alabama state line. A major goal of the reserve is to provide for research coordination and dissemination of scientific data to the community and local decision-makers to provide sound information on which to base management decisions.

The 18,000-acre reserve is home to several rare plant and animal species and serves as an essential nursery habitat for numerous important commercial and recreational fish species. GNDNERR is managed through state-federal partnership between the DMR and its local partners: Mississippi Secretary of State’s Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mississippi State University, The Nature Conservancy, The University of Southern Mississippi and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

LRA Long Term Planning Task Force Receives Updates and Final Reports from Duany Neighborhood Design Charrettes

NEW ORLEANS, La. -- The Louisiana Recovery Authority's (LRA) Long Term Planning Task Force met today to receive updates and final reports from the neighborhood design charrettes led by Andres Duany and other town planners from Duany-Planner-Zyberk (DPZ) Company earlier this year.

Through these charrettes planners worked with thousands of citizens and community leaders from three distinct areas including: downtown Lake Charles, South Acadiana and Arabi and other parts of St. Bernard parish. "These plans have become the building blocks of South Louisiana's regional vision and demonstrate how big ideas for rebuilding safer, stronger and smarter can be implemented at the local level, one neighborhood at a time," said Donna Fraiche, Chair of the LRA Long Term Planning Task Force.

The first charrette resulted in the development of a comprehensive planning strategy for downtown Lake Charles, which, like many downtowns in the U.S. has been adversely impacted by decentralized growth over the last 20 years. Lori Morinvoich with the City of Lake Charles provided a brief update on the implementation of this plan, noting that the City of Lake Charles is actively using the Smart Codes that were developed through the charrettes.

The second charrette focused on parts of Vermilion Parish, including Erath, Delcambre and Abbeville, which were devastated by Hurricane Rita. Key recommendations from the Vermilion Parish charrette included: the establishment of codes to protect open space from urban sprawl; adjustment of the embankment at the Intracoastal Waterway to better intercept storm surges and; the creation of a new neighborhood north of Erath to receive residents from Erath and Vermilion Parish who choose to build on higher ground.

The third charrette initially focused on Arabi, but was expanded to include all of St. Bernard Parish, which was one of the most extensively damaged parishes in Louisiana. While outside consultant planning in St. Bernard Parish continues, the City Planning Commission is currently in the process of updating its code of ordinances, which have not been comprehensively reviewed since 1965. The St. Bernard City Council and City Planning Commission are also aggressively working to develop a comprehensive land use plan for the future.

Funding for the charrettes was provided by the LRA Support Foundation, a private nonprofit organization that raised funds to secure a team of world-renowned planners and experts to help plan for Louisiana's future. More information about the charrettes and copies of the final plans are available online at www.louisianaspeaks.org.

In other action, the Task Force received an update from the project manager for the Unified New Orleans Plan (UNOP), Steven Bingler on the current status of the comprehensive neighborhood planning effort. Bingler noted that the members of the Community Support Organization were named and a formal memorandum of understanding was signed last month, signifying the official start of the unified effort.

He also noted that planners from the unified team are currently assembling all of the planning data and resources that had previously been created to establish a base level of work that has been

done and prevent the duplication of efforts. He also reported that in addition to the neighborhood planning meetings that are being held locally, UNOP plans to host two Community Congresses in the fall that will be broadcast to residents that are displaced in other states. The unified neighborhood planning initiative is a bottom up approach to planning that will incorporate the vision of neighborhoods and districts into a citywide plan that will be completed in December-January 2006.

Dr. Eric Baumgartner, who serves as a resource to the Louisiana Health Care Redesign Collaborative, also provided an update on efforts to integrate the work of the collaborative with the unified neighborhood planning effort on health care concepts that have implications to planning, such as the medical home concept.

LRA Education Policy Advisor, Ramsey Green also briefed the Task Force on the LRA's action to adopt eight principles from American Architectural Foundation's National Summit on School Design and green building concepts in an effort to encourage the repair and reconstruction of primary and secondary schools that serve as centers of community.

20th Texas General Land Office Adopt-A-Beach Fall Cleanup Set for September 23

26 sites up and down Texas coast to be cleaned by volunteers

AUSTIN — The 20th Texas General Land Office Adopt-A-Beach Fall Cleanup will take place Saturday, September 23rd at 26 sites along the Texas coast announced Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office. The all-volunteer event is coordinated through the Adopt-A-Beach Program of the Texas General Land Office. Additional cleanups are scheduled for the winter and spring. Volunteers can register at any of the check-in sites from 8:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. on September 23rd, and will be given data cards, gloves, pencils and trash bags. Volunteers are advised to wear closed-toe shoes, bring sunscreen, and plenty of drinking water.

“In 1986, a small group of Texans picked up trash on Padre Island in the first Adopt-A-Beach Cleanup,” Patterson said. “Now, this groundbreaking program is being expanded even further to allow Texans to help clean the beach without ever having to leave their homes.” This year, Texans who are not able to attend the cleanup on September 23rd can help keep Texas beaches clean by making a tax-deductible donation online. There are several different Adopt-A-Beach sponsorship levels ranging from \$25 to \$25,000, allowing both individuals and corporations to contribute to this major cleanup effort. “If you can’t make it to the beach, you can help from home!” Patterson said. “Your donations allow us to raise awareness about marine debris and keep our beaches clean. Every bit helps.”

Texas beaches receive large amounts of marine debris due to a convergence of currents in the Gulf of Mexico. Since 1986, more than 340,000 Adopt-A-Beach volunteers have picked up more than 6,400 tons of this debris, some of it originating from as far away as Greece. Volunteers record data on the trash to learn more about the causes of marine debris and to help mitigate pollution along Texas’ 367 miles of coastline.

The success of the Adopt-A-Beach Program is made possible by the generous efforts of dedicated volunteers and the strong support of community leaders and sponsors across the state. This year the Adopt-A-Beach Program thanks its statewide Fall Cleanup sponsors: Shell Oil Company,

Rowan Companies, Inc., Lyondell Chemical Company, Newfield Foundation, Halliburton, Flint Hills Resources, Magid Glove and Safety Manufacturing Co., and The Ocean Conservancy.

The GLO's Adopt-A-Beach Cleanups are held rain or shine! For a complete listing of cleanup sites for the upcoming Fall Cleanup, to learn how you can participate, or for additional information on the Adopt-A-Beach Program, please visit www.texasadoptabeach.org, or contact the GLO at 1-877-TX COAST.

Who: Volunteers, sponsors and GLO staff members

What: Texas General Land Office Adopt-A-Beach Fall Cleanup

When: Saturday, September 23, 2006 Registration from 8:30 a.m.– 9 a.m. Cleanup from 9 a.m. – noon

Where: 26 sites all along the Texas coast

Patterson Aims to Save Family Farms and Ranches

Conservation of land, rural way of life goal of Texas Farm and Ranch Lands Conservation Program

AUSTIN — Urban sprawl is eating up more agricultural land in Texas than ever before, but a new effort lead by Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson aims to save the family ranch or farm. The Farm and Ranch Lands Conservation Program seeks to assist landowners who wish to preserve their land for agricultural use when it would be far more profitable to sell the land for development. The program will match willing landowners with non-profit organizations interested in buying development rights from the farmer or rancher. "This will help preserve family-owned land and ranches," Patterson said. "Farmers and ranchers will be able to cash in their development rights by selling them to a third party conservation group, keeping their land in the family for generations to come."

Using conservation easements to help family ranches and farms is a new idea for Texas, said Victoria-area rancher Bob McCan, who was appointed to the Texas Farm and Ranch Lands Conservation Advisory Council by Gov. Rick Perry. "Land in Texas is 97 percent privately owned, so as a state, we have been a little slow to grasp the idea of using conservation easements for land preservation," McCan said. "I'm glad the governor and the land commissioner are paying attention to this important issue."

The program will help preserve Texas' rural heritage, said Blair Fitzsimons, Texas Advisor for Policy and Program Development for the American Farmland Trust, a Washington, D.C.-based non-profit organization dedicated to conservation of productive rural lands. "The Texas Farm and Ranch Lands Conservation Program provides an option for landowners who are forced to choose between holding on or selling out for development," Fitzsimons said.

Patterson will oversee the program. The Texas Farm and Ranch Lands Conservation Advisory Council will provide counsel to the Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office. The council will consist of four ex officio members — the Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office; the Commissioner of the Texas Department of Agriculture; the presiding officer of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission and the State Conservationist of the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Other News

Gulf of Mexico Alliance Community Workshop Report Now Available

A series of eight workshops were conducted in the five Gulf States prior to the release of the Governors' Action Plan. The workshops provided citizens the opportunity to give input on identifying priority issues and building support for change to the Gulf of Mexico. The [Community Workshop Summary Report](#) was compiled as a result of the workshops. For more information on the Community Workshops, visit the [Events](#) page.

Interagency Seamless Network Summit

Building a Seamless Network of the Nation's Ocean and Coastal Refuges, Reserves, Parks and Sanctuaries

Washington, D.C. — A General Agreement was signed yesterday between the Department of the Interior and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to increase the coordination of Parks, Sanctuaries, Reserves, and Refuges in their efforts to develop a seamless network to protect and conserve the nation's ocean and coastal refuges, reserves, parks and sanctuaries.

"The General Agreement mandates that we work together to protect these invaluable natural and cultural resources, said Kameran Onley, Assistant Deputy Secretary, Department of the Interior." "We will now be more effective in our ability to attain greater results through the exchange of agency resources." "We have today taken an important step in implementing the President's U.S. Ocean Action Plan, said Tim Keeney, Deputy Assistant Secretary of NOAA, U.S. Department of Commerce." "Our increased coordination will mean better management and protection of some very special marine and coastal areas both in the immediate future and for generations to come."

The National Park System, the National Marine Sanctuary Program, the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, and the National Wildlife Refuge System conserve a rich assemblage of coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes resources located from above the Arctic Circle to below the Equator in both hemispheres. The President's U.S. Ocean Action Plan charged these programs to better manage special marine and coastal areas in this nation. When implemented, the Seamless Network agreement will facilitate and enhance scientific understanding and conservation of coastal and marine resources, and increase coordination with state, public, and private partners.

Although they were created under separate authorities, these programs share similar resource management concerns. The result of this agreement will be greater operational and administrative efficiencies. It will include expanded partnerships among Parks, Refuges, Sanctuaries, and Reserves where they overlap or adjoin each other, and where they address similar issues of conservation and management.

During the first year of this agreement, plans will be developed to address priorities identified in the agreement. In addition, regional workshops will be conducted to identify local priorities and projects, consistent with the areas of focus in the agreement. Agencies will explore how to coordinate and facilitate the financial and administrative process to allow a timely transfer of funds, and effective sharing of facilities, vessels, equipment, personnel and other resources. The

agreement complements the Executive Order 13158 which calls for a national system of marine protected areas and with Executive Order 13352 on cooperative conservation.

Gulf Guardian Awards Application Deadline Extended to Sept 15, 2006

STENNIS SPACE CENTER, MS, Sept 5, 2006 - The [Gulf of Mexico Program](#), an office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, has extended the submission deadline for 2006 Gulf Guardian Award applications to Sept 15, 2006. Informational flyers are available below:

- [2006 Gulf Guardian Flyer - English](#)
- [2006 Gulf Guardian Flyer - Spanish](#)

This will mark the seventh year for the awards program which was started to honor the businesses, industries, non-profit organizations, government agencies, and individuals who are striving to make an environmental difference in the Gulf of Mexico. Projects and efforts within Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas are considered each year for the award which includes the following categories:

1. Business
2. Youth/Education
3. Partnerships
4. Government
5. Individual
6. Civic/Non-Profit Organizations

First, second, and third place winners in all six categories will receive a memento, press coverage on their project, and recognition by their peers. First-place winners also receive a video about their project or efforts. For more information, call Terry Teague (228) 688-1172. Past winners are online at: <http://www.epa.gov/gmpo/gulfguard.html>.

Applications are available for download on the Gulf of Mexico Program's website at: <http://www.epa.gov/gmpo/gulfguard/about-ggawards.html>

Charting the Course for Ocean Science in the United States: Research Priorities for the Next Decade

The public comment period is now OPEN for Charting the Course for Ocean Science in the United States: Research Priorities for the Next Decade, a draft document that outlines the national ocean research priorities for the United States for the next ten years. All interested parties are encouraged to review the document and provide input during this 45 day public comment period (scheduled to close October 20, 2006).

http://ocean.ceq.gov/about/sup_jsost_public_comment.html

Called for in the U.S. Ocean Action Plan and developed by the Joint Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology, this draft document, along with a follow-on Implementation Strategy, will describe a vision for U.S. ocean science and technology, highlight key areas of interaction of our society and the ocean, and identify critical ocean research priorities for these areas.

Public briefings on the national ocean research priorities are being held throughout the country over the next few months. Town hall meetings and panels will also be held at several conferences. A list of public briefings and meetings with venue details is located at:
http://ocean.ceq.gov/about/sup_jsost_orpp_outreach.html

Members from the research community, ocean educators, government representatives (federal, state, tribal, and local), industry groups, international representatives, non-governmental organizations, and any interested individuals are invited provide comments and attend the briefings.

For more information, contact: Shelby E. Walker, JSOST Project Manager
USGCRP/CCSP Office, 1717 Pennsylvania Ave., Suite 250, Washington, DC 20006
T:202-419-3464; F:202-223-3064; e-mail: <mailto:swalker@usgcrp.gov>.

Energy

Government Proposes Beginning Oil and Gas Lease Sales in Central Gulf of Mexico

August 25, 2006 — By H. Josef Hebert, Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Interior Department proposed Thursday that oil and gas leases be made available as early as next year in an area now off-limits in the east-central Gulf of Mexico. Lease sales in the nearly 2 million acres (810,000 hectares) of water would continue in each of the four years after that, according to a revised five-year leasing program made public by the department's Minerals Management Service.

For the first time, the plan also contemplates possible oil and gas development in the Atlantic Ocean off the Virginia coast. Leases would not be offered within 25 miles of shore and in a wedge-shape zone near the Chesapeake Bay to avoid conflicts with ship traffic. The department also proposes leases in the Pacific Ocean's North Aleutian Basin off Alaska. Like coastal Atlantic waters, this area currently is under a federal drilling freeze. The proposed leases would become available only if Congress were to end the drilling ban and the president modify a drilling freeze that bars development before 2012, according to the agency.

The Gulf leases are 100 miles (160 kilometers) south of the Florida Panhandle and well over 200 miles (320 kilometers) from most of the Florida peninsula's western coast. The House of Representatives has passed legislation that would lift the congressional freeze from all coastal waters more than 50 miles (80 kilometers) from shore. The Senate has approved a more narrow plan.

In all, the government said it plans to offer 21 leases in seven areas during 2007-2012: four in Alaska, two in the Gulf of Mexico and the one off Virginia. The drilling plan will succeed one set to expire in June. The proposal is open for public comment and probably will be made final early in 2007 with little, if any, change. The plan envisions the first lease sales in the central Gulf of Mexico to take place next year, followed by additional sales there in each of the subsequent years of the planning period. The Gulf lease proposal is similar to one outlined by the agency in

February. A portion along the eastern edge of the area was removed, however, because it is in a military training area.

The Minerals Management Service has estimated that the 2 million acres (810,000 hectares) encompassing the proposed Gulf drilling plan contains 930 million barrels of oil and 6 trillion cubic feet (170 billion cubic meters) of natural gas. That is enough gas to heat 6 million homes for 15 years. The proposed Gulf leasing area is much smaller than one approved recently by the Senate. Also, the Senate proposal would push drilling slightly farther from Florida's beaches, to no closer than 125 miles (200 kilometers) of shore. The government also proposed offering new leases in a number of areas without drilling restrictions: the western Gulf of Mexico and Alaska's Chukchi Sea, Beaufort Sea and Cook Inlet.

Florida Awards First Solar Energy Rebates

--Rebates provide incentive to install 'green' energy sources--

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Florida Energy Office (FEO) has awarded the first two solar energy rebates to Florida residents. The rebate recipients are located in Deltona and Crawfordville. "Through grant programs and incentives, the state is encouraging investment in alternative energy technologies such as solar to diversify fuel sources, reduce dependence on imported oil and increase protection for the environment," said FEO Director Allan Guyet. "Florida's growing economy and quality of life depend on a safe, reliable supply, and diverse source of energy."

As part of the 2006 Florida Energy Act signed by Governor Jeb Bush in June, Florida is providing incentives to encourage citizens and companies to invest in alternative energy technologies. The Deltona recipient will receive a rebate for installing a solar water heater in their home and the Crawfordville recipient will receive a rebate for installing a solar electric system that converts sunlight into electricity in his home.

Spearheaded by Governor Bush, the 2006 Florida Energy Act takes the first comprehensive step toward a diverse, reliable and secure energy future by reducing regulatory barriers to expedite electric generation capacity and providing rebates, grants and tax incentives to drive the development of alternative fuel technologies. As part of the legislation, Renewable Energy Technologies Tax Incentives will provide sales tax exemptions and corporate income tax credits for the production of clean energy; the Solar Energy Systems Incentives Program provides rebates for solar system installation in homes and businesses. The FEO is the state's primary center for energy policy under Governor Bush. In addition to developing and implementing Florida's energy policy, the Energy Office coordinates all federal energy programs delegated to the state, including energy supply, demand, conservation and allocation. For more information or a copy of Florida's Energy Plan, visit www.FloridaEnergy.org.

Patterson Stakes Claim for Texas Wind Power with Research Bid

\$80 billion international market for turbines at stake

AUSTIN — Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office, staked a claim for the future of wind power today, announcing a Texas bid for the proposed U.S. Department of Energy large-scale wind turbine research and development facility. "The race for wind energy is

like a modern day space race,” Patterson said. “In Texas, our program is ‘go’ for launch. We’re charging ahead to bring a large-scale turbine testing facility to the Texas coast.”

Texas has brought together a coalition of its best academic minds, industry leaders and public servants to focus on this bid, which will be submitted to the Department of Energy by the University of Houston. Austin-based Good Company Associates is coordinating the coalition’s efforts. Patterson, speaking on behalf of the coalition, explained that Texas best fits the Department of Energy’s requirements for the new research and testing facility. “This test facility will be a magnet for research and manufacturing,” Patterson said. “It will establish Texas as a worldwide leader in wind power for the next 100 years. It is a vital race. It is a race Texas will win.”

Wind is the fastest growing source of energy in the world today. And the potential for coastal wind power is greater than the nation’s entire capacity to generate electricity, according to researchers at the University of Houston. No coastal state has greater wind energy potential than Texas. But research into the huge turbines that will power the future just can’t be done at the Department of Energy’s National Renewable Energy Laboratory in Colorado. The Colorado facility is unable to test blades 70 meters long. The next generation blades are expected to grow even larger. Without a Texas-sized facility, the nation will be at a disadvantage in the projected \$80 billion annual international business in designing and building turbines.

“Texas has the deep-water ports, strong gulf winds, industrial know-how and political will to make our coast the perfect site for the Department of Energy’s new blade-testing facility,” Patterson said. “The only hard part here will be deciding where along the coast to place it.” A competitive site-selection process is ongoing along the Texas coast.

The Texas coalition seeking the testing facility is being organized by the University of Houston’s Cullen College of Engineering, and includes the University of Texas at Austin, Texas Tech University, West Texas A&M University, the Houston Advanced Research Center, the State Energy Conservation Office, Lt. Governor David Dewhurst, the Texas Workforce Commission, Governor Rick Perry’s Emerging Technology Fund and the Wind Coalition.

“Texas is now the largest producer of wind energy in the United States and is on the path to be the U.S. leader in offshore wind development,” said Ray Flumerfelt, Dean of the University of Houston’s Cullen College of Engineering. “We believe we will submit a formidable proposal to the Department of Energy that will ultimately result in a world-class facility being built in Texas as soon as 2008.”

The potential for offshore wind power in Texas is enormous. Texas could generate as much as 10 gigawatts of offshore wind energy, according to resource assessments conducted by the University of Houston. The nation’s cumulative wind power capacity is currently 9,971 megawatts. In May, the Department of Energy announced it is seeking partners to build a new facility capable of testing blades up to 70 meters long.

Texas — which has already signed two offshore wind leases — is a natural fit for such a Texas-sized research and development effort, Patterson said. Patterson admitted that the group’s goals are ambitious, but added that failure would mean ceding a potential \$80 billion business in designing and building wind turbines to the Europeans. “It ain’t bragging if it’s true,” Patterson said. “Texas leads the nation in the production of wind energy today, and will lead the world in the production of wind turbines tomorrow. No lesser state can compete.”

Public Hearing on Proposed Construction and Operation of Onshore LNG Import Terminal

BILOXI, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources will be holding a public hearing in Moss Point on September 18 at 6 p.m. at Pelican Landing, located at 6217 Highway 613, Moss Point, Mississippi. Bayou Casotte Energy, LLC has filed an application requesting permission to conduct regulated activities under the provision of the Coastal Wetlands Protection Law Act, Title 49, Chapter 27, Mississippi Code of 1972.

The applicant is proposing to build and operate an onshore liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminal and associated facilities south of the existing Chevron U.S.A., Inc. Pascagoula Refinery on Bayou Casotte, just east of Pascagoula, Jackson County, Mississippi. The applicant is requesting authorization to create a double-berth slip 1450 feet in length on the north side, 2,150 feet in length on the south side, and 900 feet in width using a combination of dredging and excavation to remove 4.5 million cubic yards of material. The proposed final depth of the slip is 42 feet below mean lower low water. Dredge material will be placed in the Pascagoula Offshore Dredge Material Disposal Site or utilized in beneficial use projects if appropriate projects can be located.

Excavation of the slip would impact 15.6 acres of non-tidal wetlands. The applicant also proposes to permanently impact 99.5 acres of non-tidal and 4.2 acres of tidally influenced wetlands for construction of terminal facilities and 0.9 acre of non-tidal and 1.8 acres of tidally influenced wetlands for the construction of metering stations and required hurricane levees to protect these stations. Another 17.2 acres of non-tidal and 7.7 acres of tidally-influenced wetlands are proposed to be temporarily impacted during the installation of interconnection pipelines. These temporarily impacted areas will be restored to pre-construction elevation following completion of construction activities.

The applicant also proposes to relocate Refinery Berth #7 from its present location in Bayou Casotte to a location within the proposed LNG berthing slip and to relocate Refinery Berth #6 to the south of its present position within Bayou Casotte. These Refinery Berths would be constructed within the same design and footprint as their current configurations and would have no increased impacts to coastal wetlands.

Proposed structures within the excavated berthing slip include an unloading platform at each berth. The LNG berth platform will be approximately 110 feet in length and 80 feet in width. The Refinery berth platform will be approximately 85 feet in length and 65 feet in width. A trestle 16 feet in width would extend from the top-of-grade elevation to the edge of each primary unloading platform. Two to three breasting dolphins 30 feet in length and 18 feet in width are proposed for each berth. Each berth would also have 6 mooring dolphins 18 feet in length and 15 feet in width. Other proposed structures include three tug berths on the east side of the slip, a construction dock in the southwest corner, three 16-inch LNG unloading arms and one 16-inch vapor-return arm.

Any person wishing to make comments or objections to the proposed regulated activity must submit those comments during the public hearing or in writing to the Department of Marine Resources at 1141 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, Mississippi 39530 before 5 p.m. on the following day, September 19, 2006. For more information about the project, call the DMR's Bureau of Wetland Permitting at (228) 374-5000. Visit the DMR online at www.dmr.state.ms.us.

Grant Opportunities

Marine Debris Project Funding Opportunity

The Community-based Marine Debris Prevention and Removal Project Grant opportunity is currently posted through the NOAA Restoration Center. This grant provides funding to catalyze the implementation of locally driven, community-based marine debris prevention and removal projects that will benefit coastal habitat, waterways, and NOAA trust resources. These projects must have strong on-the-ground habitat components involving the removal of marine debris and derelict fishing gear that will provide educational and social benefits for people and their communities in addition to long term ecological improvements. Successful applications will demonstrate collaboration among entities and the ability to report the total amount and type of debris removed as well as documented volunteer hours. The NOAA Restoration Center anticipates that typical project awards will range from \$15,000 to \$150,000. Projects under \$15,000 or over \$250,000 will not be accepted. Applications for this grant should be submitted via www.grants.gov by no later than 11:59pm EST on October 30, 2006. To view the full guidelines for application, please visit:

www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects_programs/crp/partners_funding/callforprojects2.html.

To obtain the complete application package, visit www.grants.gov, or contact David Landsman at David.Landsman@noaa.gov.

Training and Conferences

Training Workshops Scheduled for Red Snapper IFQ System

Tampa, Florida – August 25, 2006 - The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council announced today a series of Red Snapper Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) System training workshops. The workshops will be conducted by NOAA Law Enforcement and provide an interactive demonstration of the on-line Red Snapper Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) system. The intent is to provide IFQ shareholders and dealers, who possess a Gulf red snapper IFQ dealer endorsement, the information necessary to use the system. The workshops will also solicit input from and provide answers to potential system users. “We want to make this tool as user friendly, concise, and responsive as possible,” said Dave McKinney, NOAA Enforcement. Since red snapper transactions must be recorded electronically, three series of four workshops are planned throughout the Gulf coast to educate the users on the system. “This is as much about explaining the program as it is about reducing confusion that may lead to unintentional violations,” said McKinney.

The first series is scheduled in September, the second in November, and the third is tentatively scheduled for December. The September workshops will begin at 7:00 p.m. and conclude no later than 10:00 p.m. at the following locations:

September 11, 2006
Marriott Bay Pointe Hotel
4200 Marriott Drive
Panama City, FL

September 12, 2006
Holiday Inn
5465 Highway 90 West
Mobile, Alabama

September 13, 2006
Best Western New Orleans
1021 Airline Drive 5002
Kenner, LA

September 14, 2006
Airport Holiday Inn Galveston
5002 Seawall Boulevard
Galveston, TX

Following the demonstration will be a question and answer session. While the workshops are open to the public, it is important to note that anyone wishing to comment specifically on Amendment 26 should officially submit those comments by 5 p.m. Eastern Time, October 2, 2006, in any of the following methods:

- E-Mail: 0648-AS67.NOA@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line the following document identifier: 0648-AS67-NOA.
- Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>.
- Mail: Phil Steele, Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701
- Fax: 727-824-5308 – Attention: Phil Steele

Reef Fish Amendment 26, which establishes an IFQ system for commercial red snapper, is currently under review by the Secretary of Commerce. Approval is expected by the end of the year.

Register Online for Restore America's Estuaries 3rd National Conference

Registration is now open for Restore America's Estuaries 3rd National Conference on Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration. Look for your Conference Brochure in the mail, and you can also register online at: www.estuaries.org/conference. The Conference - Forging the National Imperative - will bring timely national attention to the challenges and opportunities to comprehensive coastal ecosystem restoration throughout the U.S., and will emphasize the challenges ahead in strengthening a national commitment to coastal restoration.

Volunteer on Saturday and Help Save New Orleans' City Park. Join with local volunteers to help plant native vegetation and put City Park back on the road to recovery. The restoration project is led by the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, and Anheuser-Busch is providing support.

For further information regarding registration, please contact Mindy Quinnette at (703) 536-4992. For further information regarding the Conference, please contact Kristin Hoelting at (206) 624-9100, ext. 3# or conference@estuaries.org. For sponsorship and/or partnership information, please contact Harvey Potts at (206) 624-9100, ext. 2# or hpotts@estuaries.org.

Did you find this edition useful? Please send suggestions, comments, and new items for publication to Laurie.Rounds@noaa.gov